

COMCAST BUSINESS HELPS AMERICAN FURNITURE RENTAL DRIVE GROWTH AND POLISH REPUTATION

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NATIONAL FURNITURE LENDER IMPROVES REAL-TIME CONNECTIVITY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE IN 22 LOCATIONS WITH COMCAST BUSINESS ETHERNET DEDICATED INTERNET

Large Furniture Rental Company with a Family-Owned Feel

American Furniture Rental (AFR) was founded in 1975 in Pennsauken, New Jersey and is now the nation's second largest provider of rental furniture, with 22 showrooms and warehouses across the country.

On the commercial side, AFR rents furniture, lighting and accessories to furnish offices, waiting rooms, tradeshow spaces and other locations. On the residential side, the company provides services to consumers furnishing a home or organizing an event, and to realtors staging open houses. AFR also sells gently owned or pre-owned furniture in its clearance centers and offers rental options for corporate relocations and natural disaster victims.

"Our commitment to high quality customer service has given us a steadfast reputation as a loyal provider with unique designs and ample availability," noted Adam Scholonick, CIO of American Furniture Rental. "As a result, our company has grown tremendously in operations and revenue while maintaining a small, family-owned feel."

Scalable Connectivity Needed to Support Customer Growth and National Expansion

Nationwide, AFR has 1.5 million serialized assets that it needs to track and inventory. Employees across the company's 25 locations are armed with scan guns that locate the items and enable them to track them within an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system housed in the company's New Jersey headquarters. Both the scan guns and the ERP system are critical business applications that depend on a robust Internet connection to function properly. Without access to these systems, AFR is unable to track its nationwide inventory and provide customers with accurate information on availability and pricing. In addition, at each retail location, AFR uses a Point of Sale (POS) system that requires a reliable internet connection so that representatives can efficiently process on-site transactions.

SITUATION

- Furniture rental company with 22 showrooms and warehouses nationwide
- Provides furniture rentals for offices, homes, special events and real estate

CHALLENGE

- Current network couldn't keep up with rapid expansion into new markets
- Needed a vendor on a national level to provide reliable bandwidth across new locations nationwide
- Struggled with scalability, speed, performance, reliability and end-user support

SOLUTION

- Comcast Business Ethernet Dedicated Internet (EDI)

RESULTS

- Reliable bandwidth supports in-store technology systems for quality customer service
- Scalable EDI enables future business growth at speeds ranging from 100 Mbps to 4 Gbps.

AFR was depending on traditional business internet service to power business operations at each location. As the company grew in size, the volume of data traversing its network increased significantly, and it was a challenge for the network to keep up. Additionally, whenever AFR opened a new location, employees had to search for a local communications provider to support operations in each new area. Not only was this a time consuming and frustrating process, it also meant relying on separate providers across the franchise, which made it difficult to manage contracts and monitor service level agreements. In addition, inconsistent service nationwide contributed to dissatisfaction in end-user support. For example, sales representatives were unable to access the most-up-to-date inventory information to help individual customers. Scalability was also lacking as sales representatives reported slowed connectivity in stores.

“AFR depends on a reliable, high-performance Internet connection to facilitate effective, accurate inventory tracking and deliver top-quality service for our customers nationwide,” added Scholonick. “Our slow connection threatened our promise and commitment to exceeding customer service expectations, and maintaining our system wasn’t an option when we considered opening new locations – there was no way our existing bandwidth could keep up with our rapid expansion. To foster continued growth, we needed a stable, single provider that could deliver the bandwidth and reliability necessary to maintain the highest level of service for our clients.”

Comcast Business Improves Customer Experience and Fuels Expansion with High-Performance, Ethernet-based Internet Services Across AFR Locations

After an extensive search for a single, reliable provider to connect each of its locations to the Internet, AFR chose Comcast Business to provide services across its corporate footprint. The company installed Ethernet Dedicated Internet (EDI) lines at each of AFR’s 22 locations, boosting speeds across the board and doubling them at some locations with connections ranging from 100 Mbps to 200 Mbps. The company’s global headquarters in New Jersey was upgraded to speeds of 4 gigabits per second (Gbps) to enable the field sales team to access the ERP, inventory, point-of-sales and other systems.

Since implementing Comcast Business EDI, AFR has experienced faster and more reliable connectivity nationwide. The company hasn’t reported a single outage since installing Comcast Business solutions almost two years ago. AFR employees can now view company assets in real-time and deliver consistent, quality customer service. With such a fast, consolidated and trustworthy connection, AFR also has the support and confidence needed to expand into new markets and open new locations.

Additionally, AFR no longer wastes time shopping around for communications providers when setting up a new store with Comcast Business as its partner. The process of opening new branches has been expedited, and now speed and service is consistently high-level, from coast to coast. Sales representatives note improved ease of use across all of AFR’s locations due to faster speeds.

“Comcast Business had the nationwide framework and services to equip our business with doubled Internet speeds and improved connectivity.”

- Adam Scholonick
CIO
American Furniture Rental

As a result of improved connectivity, employees are also able to fully utilize mobile access points distributed throughout each building, and take advantage of cloud-based business solutions they did not have the capacity to support previously. From scanning a piece of furniture in the warehouse to Face Timing and/or Skyping another AFR employee, AFR is now able to embrace a commitment to mobile technology. In addition to fueling back-end operations, being able to take advantage of mobile access points has also enhanced AFR’s mission to deliver quality customer service. Representatives are also able to provide a digital tour of the warehouse for customers via tablets, laptops or mobile phones.

“Comcast Business had the nationwide framework and services to equip our business with doubled Internet speeds and improved connectivity,” concluded Scholonick. “Comcast Business is a one stop shop for assistance across the entire network. Now that we have a strong network powering all of our existing locations, the sky’s the limit when it comes to expanding and helping new customers in new markets.”